
BURIEN COMMUNITY RECREATION CENTER SURVEY 2007

FINAL RESULTS
JANUARY 2008

PREPARED FOR

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INTRODUCTION / METHODOLOGY

The Burien Community Recreation Center Survey was conducted through a combination of mailback and Internet-based methodologies by RRC Associates, a research, planning and design firm located in Boulder, Colorado. A random sampling of Burien residents were surveyed, with the mail survey originally sent to 6,000 randomly selected households throughout the Burien area. Surveys were mailed in two waves of 3,000 questionnaires each, with the first mailing occurring in late November 2007 and the second mailing occurring in early January 2008. Recipients of the mail survey were given the option of either completing the questionnaire on paper and mailing it back to RRC postage paid, or by going to a password secure, invitation only web-based version of the questionnaire and completing it online.

Additionally, a third, open-link version of the online questionnaire was made available to all residents of Burien, who could complete the questionnaire if they did not receive one by invitation in the mail. As responses to the open-link version of the questionnaire are “self-selected” and not a part of the randomly selected sample of residents, results from this questionnaire are kept separate from the mail and invitation web versions of the survey. The discussion and graphic illustrations of results that follow focuses only on results from the randomly selected sample of residents, although results to the open-link version are provided in the tables included as appendix sections to the report.

For all versions of the questionnaire, supporting graphics and illustrations of the proposed community center were incorporated into the questionnaire in the effort to better inform the respondent as to the details of the project before they provided an answer to any question. A total of 320 completed questionnaires were received from the random mail/invitation web survey combination out of a net estimated 5,780 surveys delivered (approximately 220 surveys out of the 6,000 originally mailed were returned “undeliverable” due to invalid addresses and/or residents who have moved and no longer reside at a particular address). This represents a response rate of approximately 5.5%. A total of 120 completed questionnaires were received from the open-link version of the survey, providing another source of information for review.

The primary list source used for the mailing was a third party list purchased from Equifax, one of the three largest credit reporting agencies in the world. Use of the Equifax list also includes renters in the sample who are frequently missed in other list sources such as utility billing lists (survey results show 16% of respondents to be renters). The rigorous list management process employed in the survey provides us with the most accurate, up-to-date, representative list possible based upon all available sources.

Based upon the total sample size of 320 responses received from the random sample, overall results have a margin of error of approximately +/- 5.5 percentage points calculated for questions at 50% response¹.

¹ For the total random sample size of 320, margin of error is +/- 5.48 percent calculated for questions at 50% response (if the response for a particular question is “50%”—the standard way to generalize margin of error is to state the larger margin, which occurs for responses at 50%). Note that the margin of error is different for every single question response on the survey depending on the resultant sample sizes, proportion of responses, and number of answer categories for each question. Comparison of differences in the data between various segments, therefore, should take into consideration these factors. As a general comment, it is sometimes more appropriate to focus attention on the general trends and patterns in the data rather than on the individual percentages.

Key findings from the study are summarized below. Additionally, several of the questions on the survey form allowed respondents to “write in” their response or comment. Major themes that emerge from the comments are summarized in the report, while a complete set of the comments is provided as an appendix section.

In addition to overall responses, results are also segmented comparing respondents by location of residence, registered voters vs. not registered to vote in Burien, by age of respondent, and by family-marital status (additional cross tabulations of the data can also be provided upon request). This segmentation of the results helps to further “explain” local opinions and provides additional insight to recreation issues in Burien.

OVERVIEW OF RESULTS

Initially, it should be noted that the survey respondent profile skewed slightly older than the actual population of Burien. Although the survey data were not “re-weighted” to reflect the actual population, if the data were to be normalized, the results would tend to show slightly more support for the recreation center and for funding than as indicated in the tables, graphs, and discussion that follows due to the fact that stronger support tends to exist among younger residents in the sample than it does among older residents. As such, the results that follow represent a more conservative estimate of support for the center and for funding.

Before reviewing results, we direct the reader to review the questionnaire language in detail (included as an appendix section), as it contains extensive background information about the proposed community center beyond what can be summarized here and throughout the report.

In summary, a moderately high level of support for an additional property tax to build the facility exists, with 31 percent of respondents overall saying they would “definitely” vote yes and 30 percent saying they would “probably” vote yes if such a proposal were to appear on a future City ballot (61 percent altogether would definitely/probably vote yes). One-third of all respondents (33 percent altogether) would definitely (25 percent) or probably (8 percent) vote no, while 6 percent are uncertain. Sixty-four percent of currently registered voters would definitely/probably vote yes.

At the same time, a proposal to include an additional tax for other neighborhood park facility improvements throughout the community and for recreation center facility operations does not necessarily help the attractiveness of the initiative (it would probably be less likely to pass if this were done). Support drops to 52 percent overall supporting a ballot initiative that includes additional money for other parks improvements, and 56 percent supporting a ballot initiative that includes money for recreation center operations costs. Among currently registered voters, however, those figures are 54 percent and 59 percent, respectively.

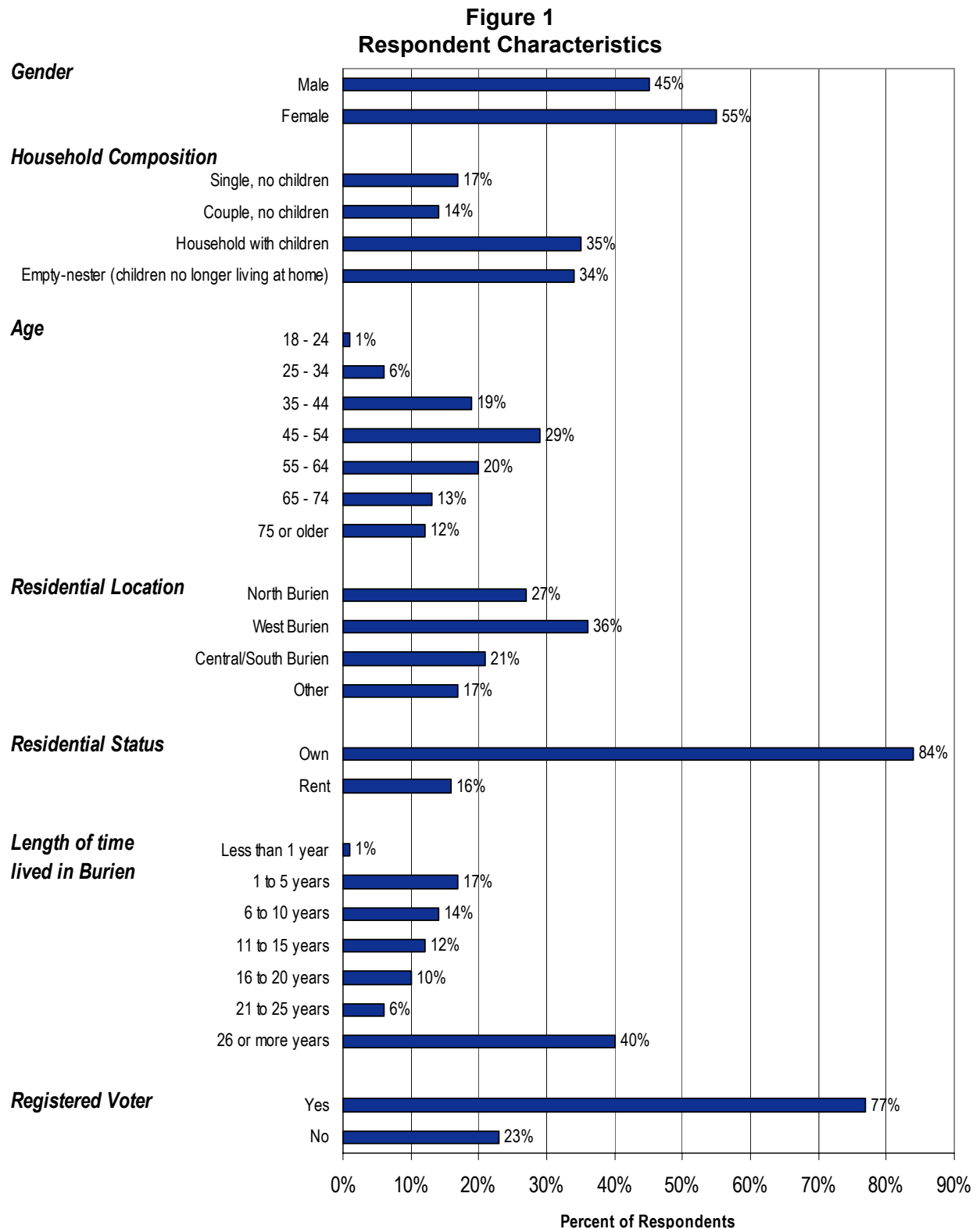
Some of the open-ended comments against the proposed ballot measure are quite strong, with many commenting that taxes are already way too high in Burien. On the positive side, many residents recognize the benefits such a facility would provide—a place for young and old people alike to come to and socialize (in particular, giving young people a place to go and something positive to do to help them stay out of trouble). Residents also comment that such a facility would “add to the revitalization of Burien” and it is something that is needed—“it is past due,” one resident commented.

If the facility were to be built, respondents overwhelmingly say they would prefer that the City “build the entire center at once” and not in phases, as tested in the survey. Overall, 69 percent of residents indicated this preference with only 7 percent favoring a phased approach.

Concluding, the Burien Community Recreation Center Survey provides crucial information from the community on the desire and willingness to pay for a new community recreation center facility, not only from the potential users of the facilities and programs, but from the non-users who are also taxpayers and voters. While a moderately high level of support for the facility and for funding would appear to exist based on the survey results, we caution that, with the margin of error the study possesses, the actual outcome of an election could be different (possibly even closer to a 50/50 proposition). However, a concerted, aggressive public relations initiative to expound the benefits a community center could help to sway public opinion and build voter support for the facility. As such, the passage of the measure would seem to have a reasonable chance of succeeding provided that additional earmarks for center operations and other City parks improvements/repairs are not included in the measure.

RESPONDENT PROFILE

The following figure represents the overall profile of mail and web invitation survey respondents.

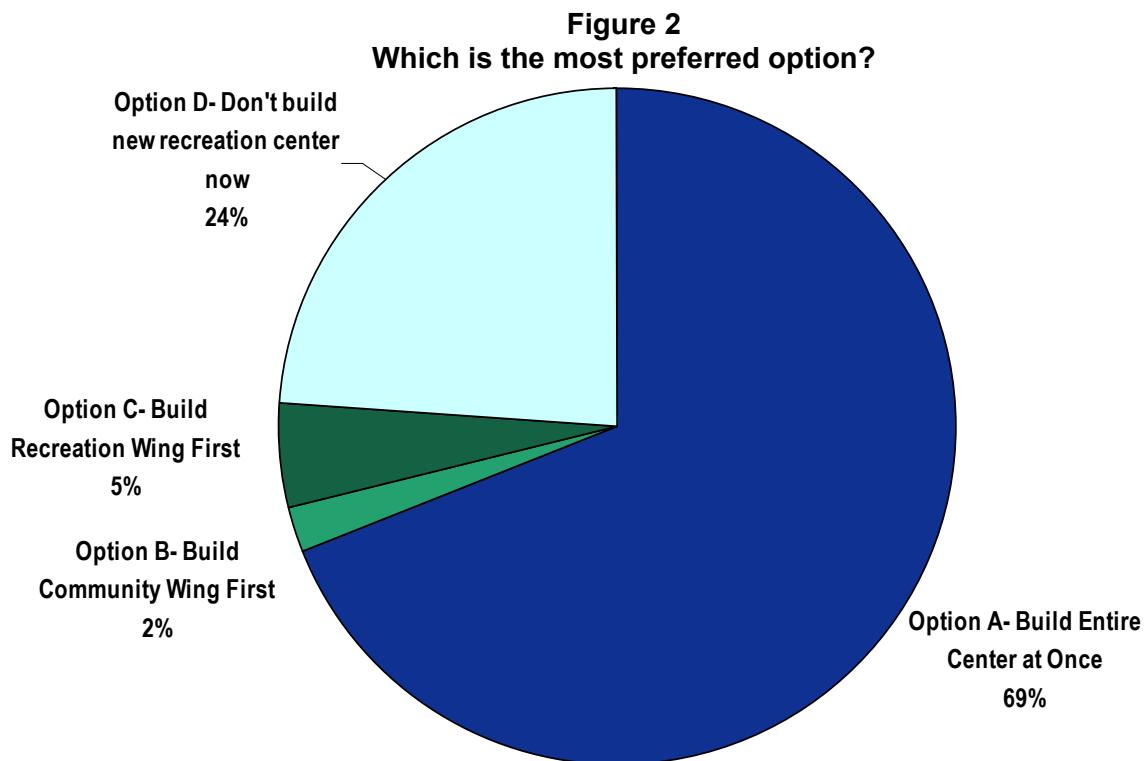


CONSTRUCTING THE CENTER: GETTING IT BUILT

Which would be your most preferred option of how to build the new facility?

The survey listed four options of how the new facility could be built, along with the costs and tax increases associated with each option (see details of this language contained in the questionnaire provided in the appendix). In summary, the four options include:

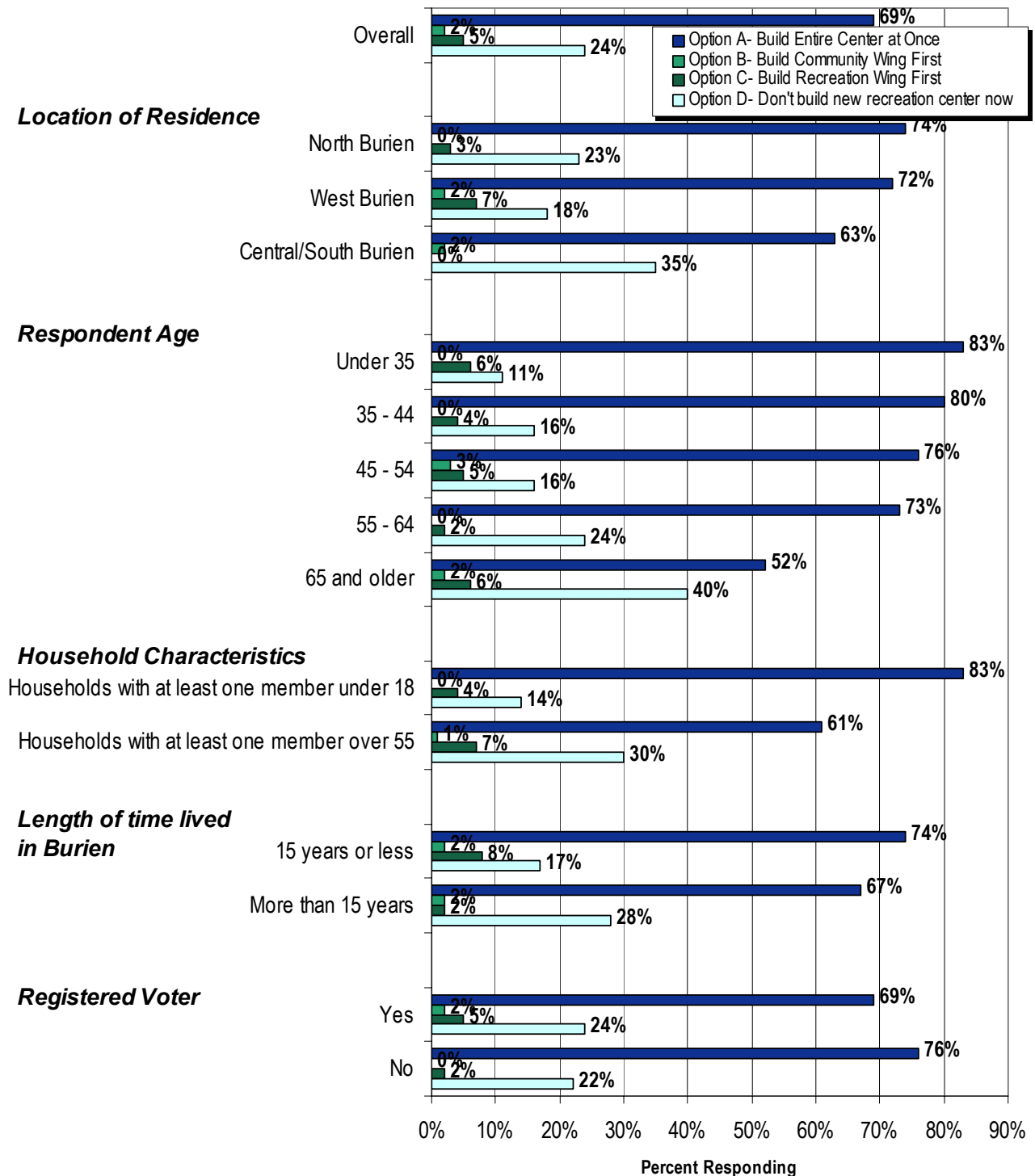
- Option A – Build the entire center all at once; \$35 million total cost; estimated \$15/month per household property tax increase based on a typical Burien home's assessed value of \$300,000
 - Option B – Build the community wing first; then build the recreation wing later; \$44 million total cost; \$22/month per household property tax
 - Option C – Build the recreation wing first; then build the community wing later; \$40 million total cost; \$20.50/month per household property tax
 - Option D – Don't build a new recreation center, relocate to another building; unknown cost.
- The majority of respondents (69 percent) indicated that they would like to see the center built all at once. The two options which included a phased building plan were the least identified by respondents (2 percent in favor of Option B; 5 percent in favor of Option C), while almost a quarter of respondents prefer not to build a new facility.



- When looking at these preferences more closely by respondent type, Option A remained as the top choice among all respondent segmentations, followed by Option D, with very little support indicated for Options B and C. The results (shown in the following figure) show varying levels of support for Options A and D among the different respondent types.

- Greater support for building the entire center at once was apparent among North and West Burien residents, younger residents (respondents under the age of 65), households with at least one member under the age of 18, and respondents who have lived in the area for less than 15 years. Older residents (generally over age 65) are most likely to be opposed to building the center (40 percent).
- Support for not building the center now was greater among Central/South Burien residents, respondents 65 years and older, households with at least one member over the age of 55, and respondents who have lived in Burien for more than 15 years.

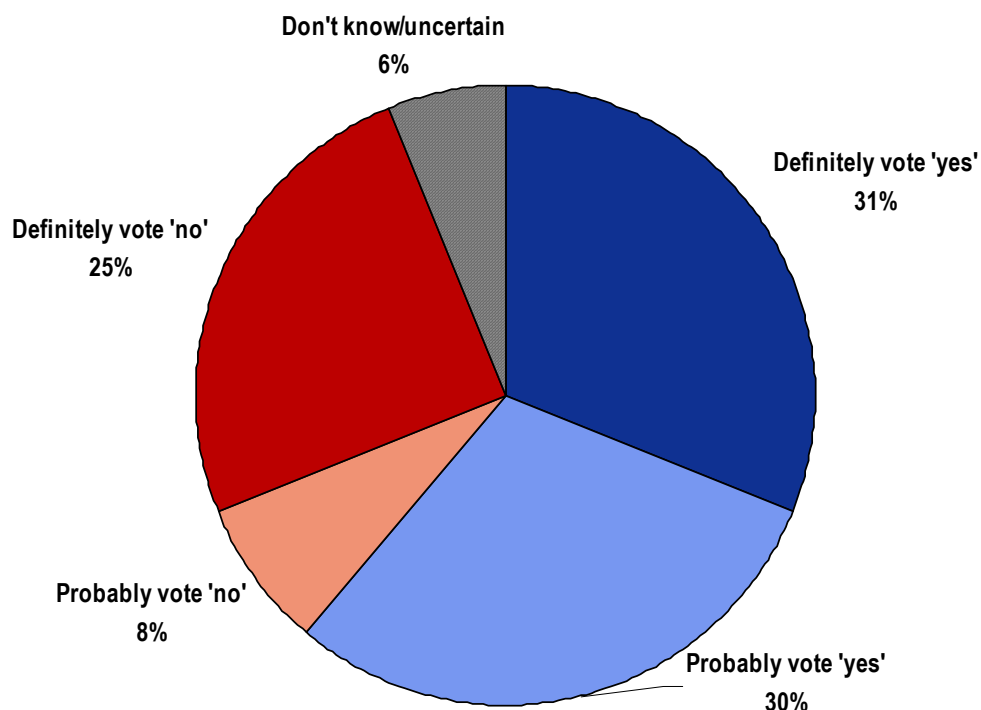
Figure 3
Which is the most preferred option?



Would you support a property tax increase/bond levy for the purpose of BUILDING a new community recreation center if such a proposal were to appear on a future City ballot?

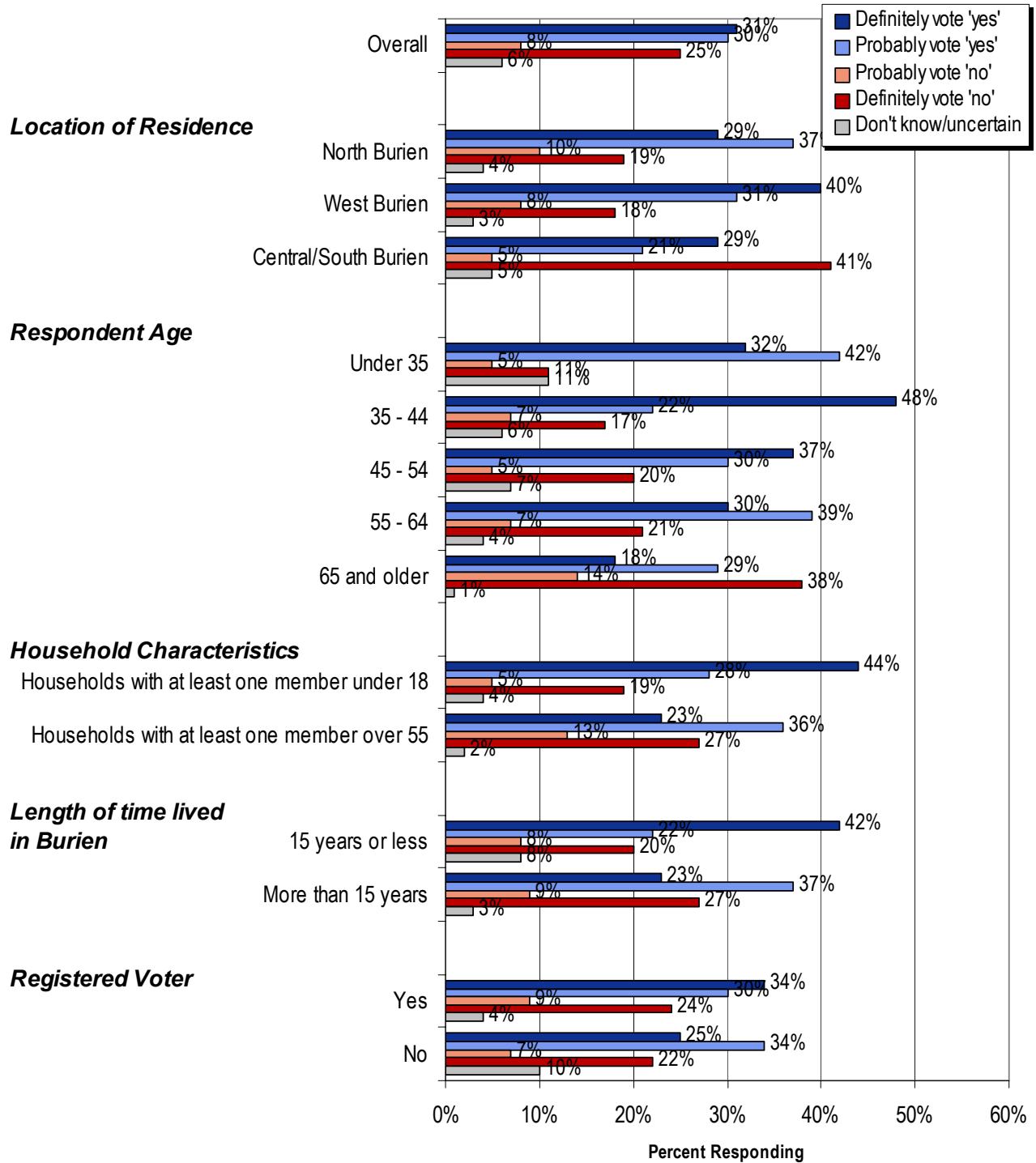
- Overall, 31 percent of respondents would “definitely” vote yes, while 30 percent would “probably” vote yes if such a proposal were to appear on a future City ballot (61 percent altogether definitely/probably voting yes). One-third of respondents (33 percent altogether) would definitely (25 percent) or probably (8 percent) vote no, while 6 percent are uncertain. Sixty-four percent of registered voters would definitely/probably vote yes.

Figure 4
Support a property tax increase to build a new center



- Similar to the support shown for building the entire facility at once, support for a property tax increase/bond levy for the purpose of building a new community recreation center was clearly stronger among North and West Burien residents, respondents under the age of 65, households with at least one member under the age of 18, and respondents who have lived in Burien for 15 years or less. Residents aged 35-44 are particularly enthusiastic, with 48% definitely voting yes and 22% probably voting yes (70% altogether voting yes).
- Central/South Burien residents and respondents 65 years or older indicated the most opposition to such a measure.

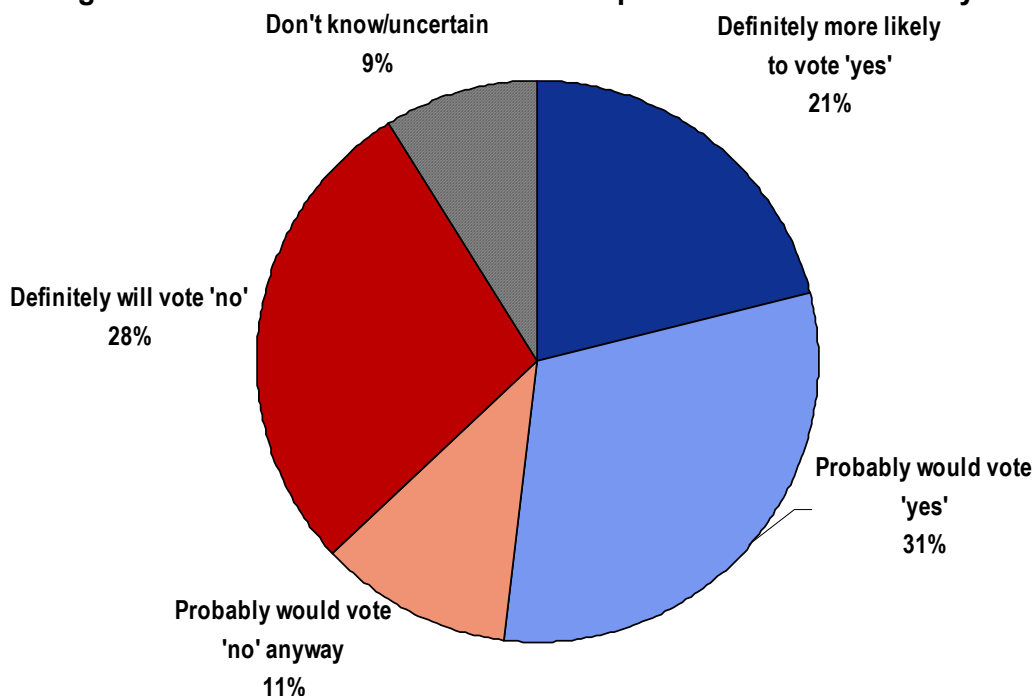
Figure 5
Support a property tax increase to build a new center



Many of the City's neighborhood parks need improvements and repairs. These could include new playgrounds, playground repairs, trail improvements, restrooms, etc. Would you be more likely to support a larger bond measure if funds were included to make these improvements?

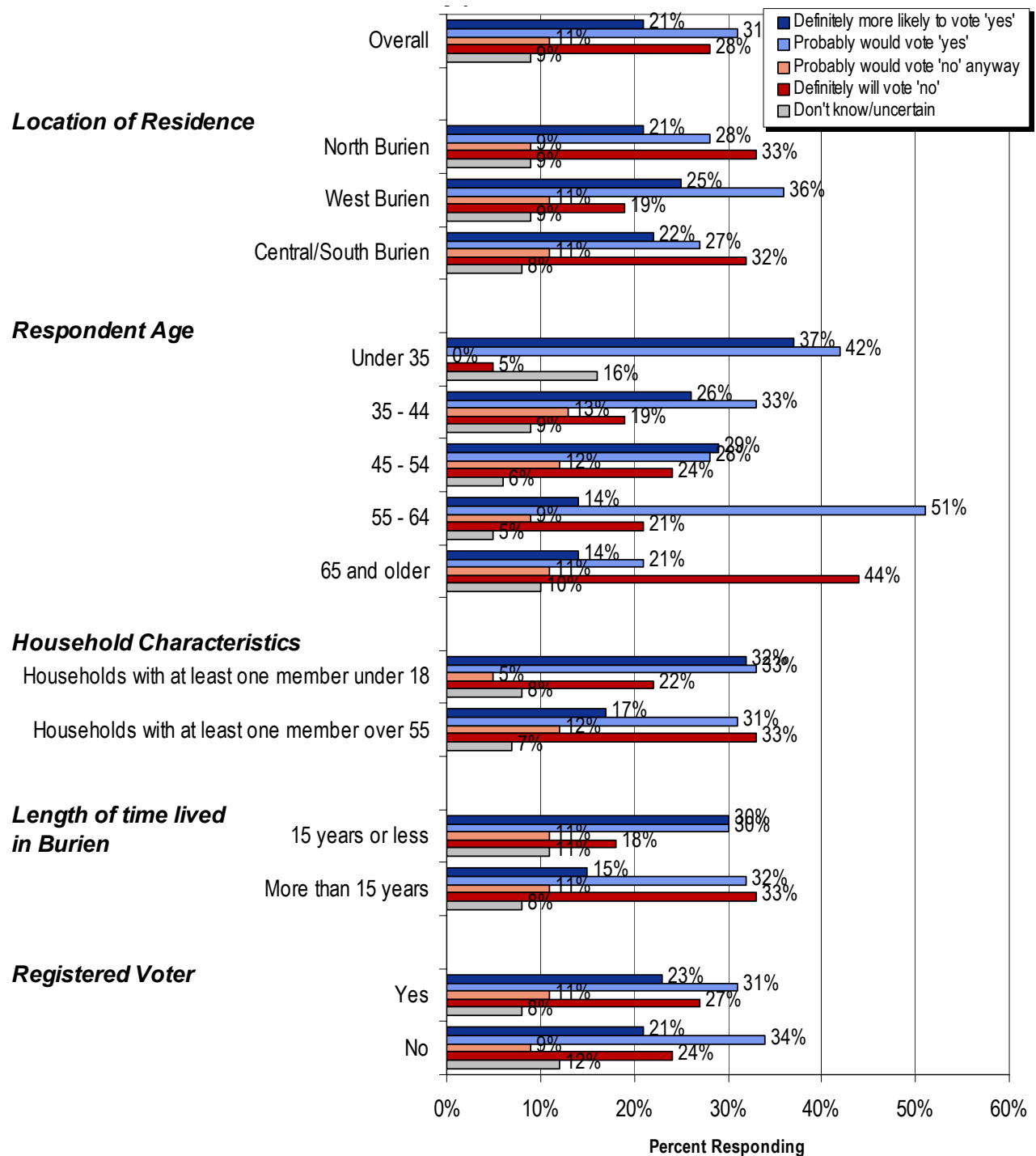
- Overall, 52 percent of all respondents would support such an initiative (21 percent would definitely vote yes and 31 percent would probably vote yes), 39 percent would oppose such a measure (28 percent would definitely vote no and 11 percent would probably vote no), while 9 percent don't know (Figure 6). Fifty-four percent of registered voters would support this initiative.

Figure 6
Support larger bond measure if funds included improvements for other City Parks facilities?



- When looking at responses by various respondent types, support was again strongest among younger residents, households with at least one member under the age of 18, and respondents who have lived in Burien for 15 years or less.
- While support remains stronger among West Burien residents, North Burien and Central/South Burien residents were not as likely to support a larger bond measure that included funds to make improvements to existing parks.
- Respondents 65 years and older indicated the highest likelihood of voting no on this initiative.

Figure 7
Support larger bond measure if funds included improvements for other City Parks facilities?



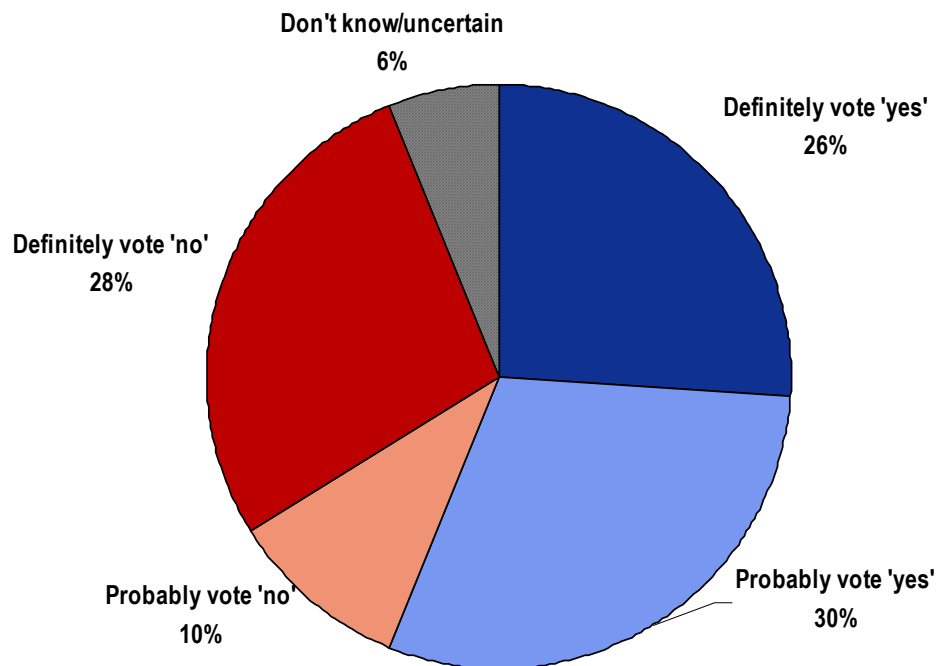
RUNNING THE CENTER: OPERATING AND MAINTAINING IT

The business plan for the new community recreation center indicates that the new facility would require an additional \$500,000 per year of operating subsidy beyond that provided to the existing Community Center.

In addition to an increase in property taxes to BUILD the Center, would you be in favor of a 13-cent increase to the existing property tax rate of \$1.51 to provide added operating support?

- Overall, 56 percent of all respondents would support such an initiative (26 percent would definitely vote yes and 30 percent would probably vote yes), 38 percent would oppose such a measure (28 percent would definitely vote no and 10 percent would probably vote no), while 6 percent don't know (Figure 8).

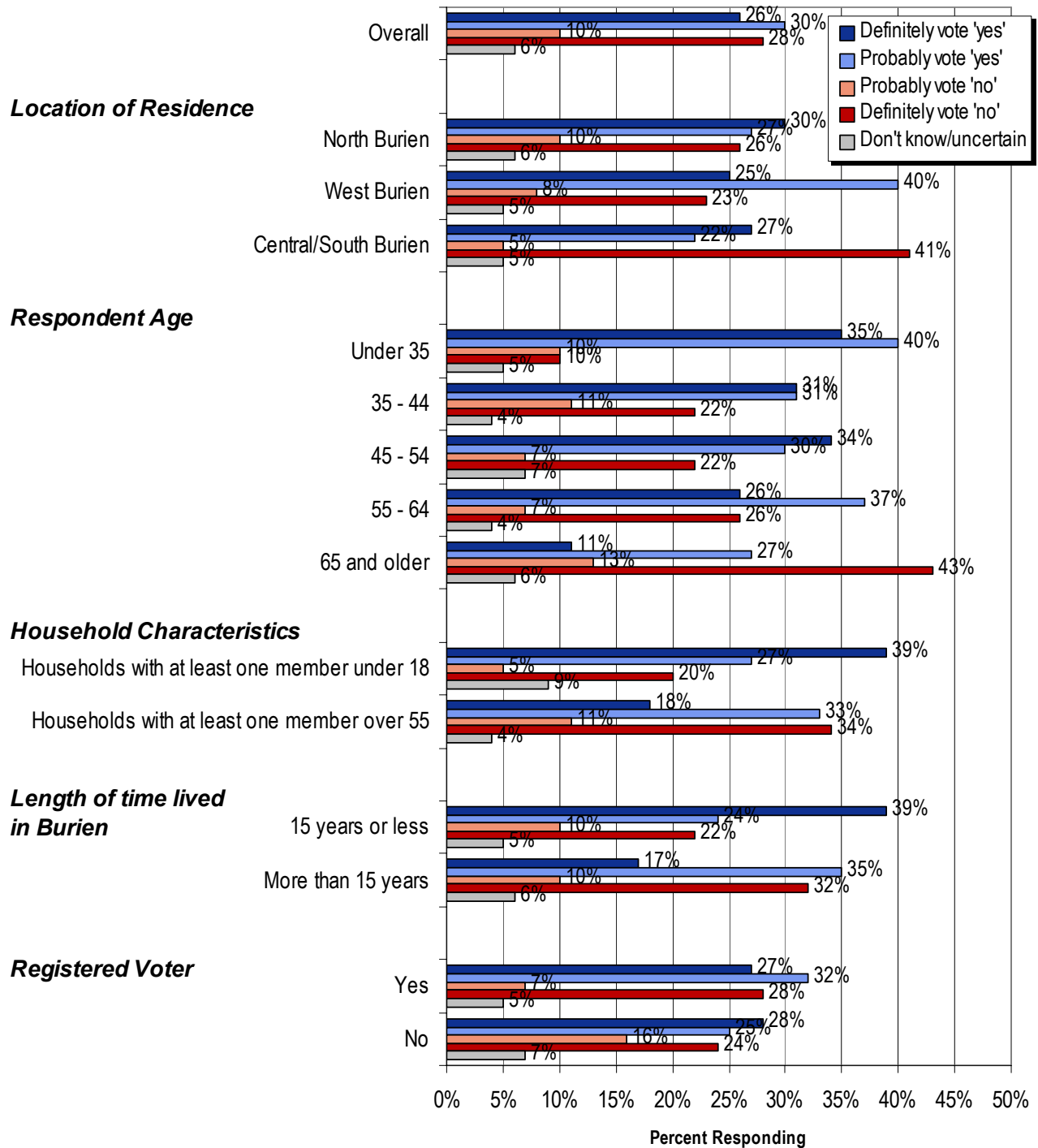
Figure 8
In addition to building the center, would you be in favor of a property tax increase to provide added operational support?



- Consistent with support for the initiatives described in previous sections of this report, support for a property tax increase for operations was highest among younger residents, households with children living at home, and respondents who have lived in Burien for 15 years or less.
- While support is relatively consistent among respondents from all areas in Burien, the strongest opposition to a property tax increase was again seen among Central/South Burien residents.

Figure 9

In addition to building the center, would you be in favor of a property tax increase to provide added operational support?



USING THE CENTER: “PAY-TO-PLAY” USER FEES

To participate in programs at the existing center and the new center, people pay fees for certain programs and rental fees for meeting rooms. In addition, “pay-to-play” fees would be charged to use the new leisure pool, gym, fitness rooms and walking track. The business plan indicates that the new center will need to generate almost \$250,000 per year in admission or user fees.

City of Burien residents will receive a discounted rate on these user fees. Possible daily use fees are shown below. Also, frequent users will receive discounts on monthly and annual passes and multi-use punch cards. Those on fixed or low incomes will not be denied access and there will be options for scholarships and volunteerism to offset fees.

Possible User Fee Rates	Resident Per Day Fee	Non-resident Per Day Fee
Adult Resident	\$5.00	\$7.50
Youth Resident	\$3.00	\$4.50
Senior Resident (65+).....	\$3.00	\$3.50

Feelings on the proposed user fee structure

- Overall, 70 percent of all respondents were in favor of this fee structure (40 percent indicated they were “definitely” okay with it and 30 percent were “probably” okay with it), 23 percent were not in favor of the fee structure (15 percent were “definitely” not in favor of it and 8 percent were “probably” not in favor of it), while 7 percent don’t know (Figure 10). These results were relatively consistent across all respondent types.

Figure 10
Feelings on the proposed user fee structure

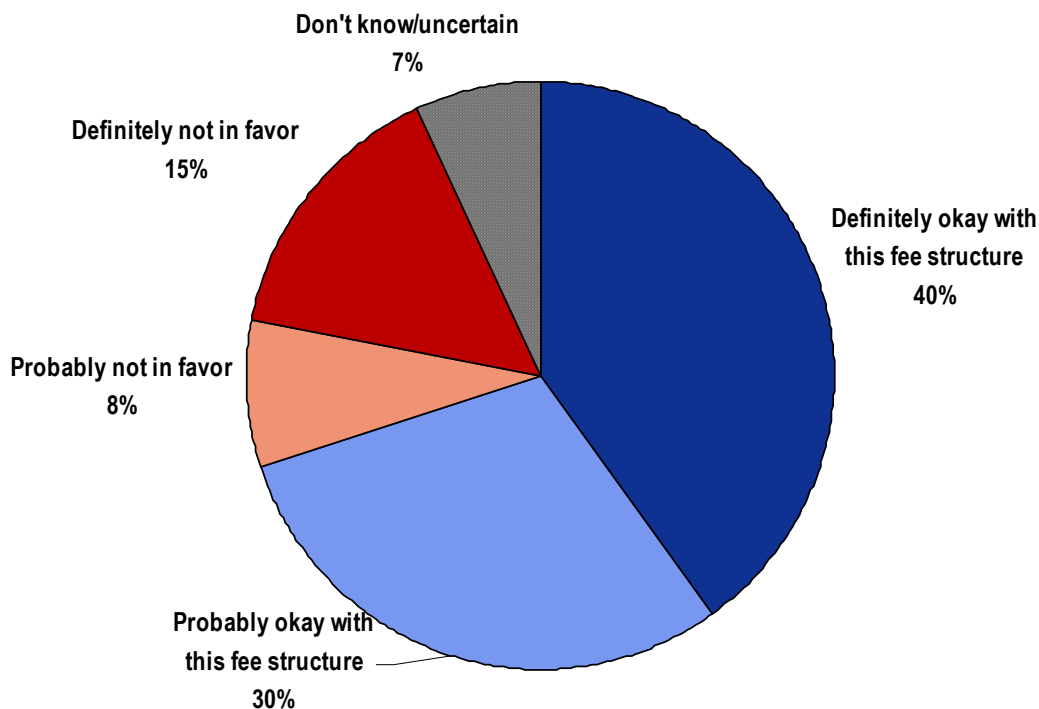


Figure11
Feelings on the proposed user fee structure

